

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 261343Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5779
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 0403

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJECT: MAGALHAES CONTINUES TO POLITIC

REF: (A) SAO PAULO 152; (B) RIO DE JANEIRO 313

1. SUMMARY. SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO HAS CONTINUED ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL WITH A SERIES OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES, SPEECHES AND MEETINGS. HIS CAMPAIGN ALSO CONTINUES TO ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE MEDIA ATTENTION AND TO BE AN EVIDENT CAUSE FOR CONCERN AMONG GOVERNMENT LEADERS IN BRASILIA. MAGALHAES HAS INDICATED THAT HE MIGHT SELECT A FOUR STAR GENERAL AS A VICE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE. UNCERTAINTY OVER THE SPECIFIC DATE FOR THE ARENA PARTY CONVENTION REMAINS. END SUMMARY.

2. AS INDICATED BY SEVERO GOMES TO CONGEN SAO PAULO (REFTEL A), SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO HAS ACTIVELY PURSUED HIS CAMPAIGN DURING THE PAST TEN DAYS WITH SPEECHMAKING, MEETINGS AND APPEARANCES IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRASILIA, SAO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO. THESE VARIED FROM A MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BRAZILIAN CONFERENCE
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OF BISHOPS IN BRASILIA TO AN APPEARANCE AT A SAMBA SCHOOL IN RIO. HIS ACTIVITIES ALSO CONTINUE TO GENERATE CONSIDERABLE PRESS COVERAGE, PRESUMABLY A MAJOR OBJECTIVE. THE PRESS ATTENTION TO MAGALHAES CONTRASTS WITH THE RELATIVELY MODEST COVERAGE GIVEN TO THE OFFICIAL ARENA CANDIDATE, GENERAL FIGUEIREDO, WHO DURING THIS PERIOD HAS KEPT THE PRESS AT ARMS LENGTH. ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE RIO JOURNALIST,

JORNAL DO BRASIL POLITICAL ANALYST MARCOS SA CORREIA, TOLD CONGEN OFFICER JANURARY 24 THAT CONCERN OVER THE PUBLIC ATTENTION WHICH MAGALHAES WAS RECEIVING HAD REACHED SUCH A POINT THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS IN BRASILIA HAD DECIDED TO "RELAUNCH" THE CANDIDACY OF GENERAL FIGUEIREDO. SA CORREIA WAS UNCERTAIN WHAT FORM THIS RELAUNCHING WOULD TAKE BUT IT WOULD MOST PROBABLY TAKE THE FORM OF A MEDIA BLITZ.

3. WHILE THE SENATOR HAS ACHIEVED MEDIA COVERAGE, HE HAS CONSPICUOUSLY FAILED TO ATTRACT, AT LEAST PUBLICLY, NOTABLE PERSONALITIES TO HIS CAMP. RATHER, ONE OF THOSE TWO SENATORS WHO PURPORTEDLY BACK HIM, SENATOR TEOTONIO VILELA (ARENA-ALAGOAS), PUBLICLY DENIED THAT HE WAS SUPPORTING MAGALHAES. NOR HAS MAGALHAES' CURRENT CHAMPIONING OF A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY WON OVER MANY IN THE OPPOSITION MDB, SEVERAL OF WHOM HAVE POINTEDLY RECALLED THAT MAGALHAES ENDORSED AI-5 AS A MINISTER IN THE COSTA E SILVA REGIME.

4. THE SENATOR INDICATED DURING THIS PERIOD THAT HE MIGHT WELL SELECT AN ACTIVE DUTY FOUR STAR GENERAL AS HIS VICE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE. HE HAS PROMOSED A NAME DURING THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. CAMARA LEADER JOSE BONIFACIO QUICKLY RETORTED THAT WHILE HE FOUND MAGALHAES' DESIRE FOR A FOUR STAR ACTIVE DUTY GENERAL AS A RUNNING MATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"REASONABLE", HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT NEITHER AN ACTIVE DUTY GENERAL NOR RETIRED GENERAL EULER BENTES, A NAME MUCH SPECULATED ON IN PRESS AND POLITICAL CIRCLES AS A ONE-TIME AN AND STILL POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO FIGUEIREDO, WOULD ACCEPT THIS CHARGE IF PROFFERRED. BONIFACIO WENT ON TO CALL THE MAGALHAES CAMPAIGN "BRILLIANT", BUT WEAK POLITICALLY SINCE HE STOOD NO CHANCE IN THE ARENA CONVENTION.

5. ACCORDING TO JORNAL DO BRASIL, SENATE PRESIDENT PETRONIO PORTELLA WAS SAID TO BE CONCERNED OVER THE "RADICALIZATION" OF MAGALHAES' CAMPAIGN. A SIMILAR REACTION WAS EXPRESSED TO THE CONSUL GENERAL BY A NATIONALLY PROMINENT BANKING LEADER WHO IS CLOSE TO THE GEISEL ADMINISTRATION. OTHER UNNAMED ARENA SOURCES WERE SAID TO BELIEVE THAT MAGALHAES' STATEMENTS WERE REACHING A POINT WHERE AI-5 COULD BE INVOKED (PRESUMABLY TO CASSATE THE SENATOR) ALTHOUGH THESE SOURCES INDICATED THAT CASSATION WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT EXTERNALLY AND, AS COLUMNIST COSTELLO BRANCO COMMENTED, PROBABLY LACKS POLITICAL VIABILITY.

6. FOR HIS PART ARENA PRESIDENT FRANCELINO PEREIRA

STATED THAT GENERAL FIGUEIREDO WILL MAKE A MAJOR SPEECH AT THE ARENA CONVENTION AFTER THE CONVENTION APPROVED HIS NOMINATION. PEREIRA HAS ALSO DENIED THAT HE HAD REQUESTED ARENA REGIONAL DIRECTORATES TO INDICATE THEIR PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR FIGUEIREDO'S CANDIDACY ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF DIRECTORATES FROM VARIOUS STATES HAVE DONE SO IN RECENT DAYS. PERIRA'S DENIAL FOLLOWED ACCUSATIONS BY MAGALHAES THAT THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF ARENA WAS EXERTING PRESSURE ON THE STATE ORGANIZATIONS TO LINE UP BEHIND FIGUEIREDO AND, INTER ALIA, VIOLATING THE SECRECY OF CONVENTION VOTING MANDATE BY LAW.

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7. THE UNCERTAINTY OVER THE EXACT DATE FOR THE ARENA PARTY CONVENTION CONTINUED WITH BOTH SENATOR PORTELLA AND SENATOR MAGALHAES ASSERTING LEGAL ARGUMENTS OVER THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE AT WHICH THE CONVENTION MIGHT BE HELD. PORTELLA HAS INDICATED THAT A CONVENTION IS LEGALLY POSSIBLE AFTER MARCH 28, BUT THAT A FINAL DECISION MUST BE MADE BY PARTY PRESIDENT PEREIRA AND PRESIDENT GEISEL.

8. COMMENT. THE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN EMINATING FROM BRASILIA OVER MAGALHAES' CAMPAIGN MAY STEM LESS FROM WORRY OVER THE PUBLIC IMPACT MAGALHAES IS APPARENTLY ACHIEVING (SINCE BOTH THE NOMINATION AND ELECTION PROCESSES ARE INDIRECT) THAN FROM CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE DEFECTIONS TO HIS CAUSE FROM THE MILITARY, WHERE THERE IS CONTINUED GRUMBLING ABOUT THE FACT THAT FIGUEIREDO WAS SELECTED WITHOUT MILITARY CONSULTATION AND ABOUT FIGUEIREDO PERSONALLY. SHOULD MAGALHAES BE ABLE TO ENLIST AN ACTIVE

DUTY FOUR STAR GENERAL TO HIS CAMPAIGN (WHICH WE BELIEVE
IS UNLIKELY), OR A RETIRED ONE (A POSSIBILITY), THESE
CONCERNS WILL PROBABLY GROW.

9. EMBASSY CONCURS.

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